

Ground safety problem

Blues were advised to withdraw

THE mystery over Wycombe Wanderers bid — or otherwise — to join the Football League was clarified this week when the club made it clear that the League had advised them to withdraw their application.

In a statement, Wanderers said that because of the considerable work involved in bringing their ground up to the required safety standard, they had decided to accept the League's advice to withdraw.

This was done just before Wycombe left for their tour of Portugal. The decision was taken by chairman Reg Williams in consultation with vice-chairman Brian Lee and secretary John Goldsworthy.

While they were away, the Football League said that Wycombe had withdrawn their application, without stating that they had been advised to do so.

Because Wycombe of-

ficials could not tell their side of the story, the impression was wrongly gained that the club had lost interest in joining the League. This they strongly deny.

"The club is not deterred from its stated aim of membership of the Football League and are determined to overcome the problems. Costing exercises will be carried out and a planned programme of work formulated and further advice sought from the Football League," says Wycombe.

Criticism

Because this position arose just before the start of the tour, Wycombe's top officials had not time to tell the rest of the committee and they decided to sit on it and reveal all at the end of the tour.

Unfortunately for them the League's comments upset these plans and the club has come in for criticism from fans, without, until now, being able to give their side of the story.

One man, who admitted he knew nothing about the mat-

ter was the manager, Mike Keen.

Mr Goldsworthy explained why. "Mike Keen is an employee of the club. Matters of club policy are dealt with by the officers and committee."

When Football League officials inspected Loakes Park last month, they made it clear that the crowd safety factors, currently applied to First and Second Divisions were now to be applied to the Third and Fourth.

These regulations seek to segregate at all times within the confines of the ground, the supporters of both clubs, and also to prevent a pitch invasion.

Wanderers state: "During the course of discussions it became apparent that even assuming the finance was available, it was impossible to complete all the work in time for the League's annual meeting this week.

Problems

"In view of these facts the Club was advised by the Football League to withdraw their application for As-

sociate Membership for the time being."

Some idea of the problems facing the Club which need to be overcome bearing in mind the legislation, which looks particularly at segregation of supporters are:

Currently movement of crowds is unrestricted all around the ground, therefore areas need to be fenced, such as the terracing behind both goals. This would then contain the ground in four sections.

If this were done, toilet facilities would not be available at the Hospital end or the covered enclosure. So these would have to be constructed. While at present there is available adequate turnstiles and exits, with segregation this could mean building turnstiles and exits at the Hospital end.

The terracing at the Hospital end would need to be concreted and all loose rubble removed. The perimeter fence to the pitch is not considered sufficiently high to prevent access in the case of determined efforts and therefore would need to be raised.